1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

of bands as part of any political or legal system; they were members of households as part of a domestic system. What held the unit together was the central position and dominance of the father or husband, and hence the life of a household was only as long as his lifetime. When he died, the household broke up and the surviving members joined other households, perhaps in the same district, perhaps in some other band territory. Such change of household was carried out by the individuals concerned, not quite at will, but certainly not with sufficient uniformity for any political or legal label to be put upon it.

Uniformity was derived from the fact that every Tiwi had to live in a household. The universal prohibition on unmarried females was obviously one expression of that requirement. For men, the requirement was less firm, and if a young man wanted to live entirely alone he was free to try—although there is no record of any man having tried it for more than a few weeks at a time. Even if his mother were dead and his father or step-father did not welcome him, he attached himself to some household since, apart from any question of loneliness, this was the only way by which he could eat regularly. For Tiwi households were primarily autonomous food-producing and food-consumption units. A household made its own decisions, camped where it saw fit to camp, moved on when the food quest made it advantageous or necessary to move on. A large household, such as that of Ki-in-kumi or any other big man, was a complete community in itself, with the old man as executive director. He laid down the daily, weekly, and monthly work and travel schedules for the women, the young men, and the children. Most of the time the work went automatically because all the adults and the older children knew their jobs.

Daily Activities

By shortly after dawn each day, the household was up, and after a light breakfast, usually of leftovers from the previous night, everybody left camp to go to work. The women and children (except perhaps the five- to ten-year-old boys, who were rather useless at that age) scattered in every direction from the camp with baskets and/or babies on their backs, to spend the day gathering food, chiefly vegetable foods, grubs, worms, and anything else edible. Since they had spent their lives doing it, the old women knew all about gathering and preparing vegetable foods, and they supervised the younger women. This was one important reason for men marrying widows, and even a man with many young wives was quite likely to remarry an elderly widow or two nonetheless. A husband with only young wives might have a satisfactory sex life, but he still needed a household manager if he wished to eat well. The supervision of the female members of the household was left to the old women and, provided the returns were good, the husband did not attempt to interfere nor to give orders concerning the details of women's work.

After the women had scattered out in a wide circuit from the camp, the husband might hunt, but only if he were not too old. In hunting kanga-

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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roos,[1] wildfowl, and other game, keen eyesight is essential, hence Tiwi men did very little hunting once they were past about forty-five, though they hated to admit their hunting days were over. The meat, fish, and game provided for the large household of an old man was obtained by the young men, and this was about the only thing an old man thought his sons or his step-sons were good for. Typically the young man, when he returned at nightfall with a kangaroo which he had spent most of the day tracking down and spearing, would ignore the old man and dump the carcass at the feet of his mother as if to say, "I brought this back for you, not for that old So and So."

As the women straggled back to camp toward sundown with the results of their day's gathering and the young hunters brought in their bags, cooking began and the main meal of the day (usually the only hot meal) was eaten. The Tiwi themselves had no doubt about the close relationship between plural marriage and good eating. "If I had only one or two wives I would starve," the head of a large household once told the missionary who was preaching against plural marriage, "but with my present ten or twelve wives I can send them out in all directions in the morning and at least two or three of them are likely to bring something back with them at the end of the day, and then we can all eat." This was a realistic appraisal of the economic situation and it is to be noted that he put the emphasis on the food obtained by the women gatherers rather than that supplied by the male hunters. Based on the observations of 1928-29, it would appear that the Tiwi ate pretty well, especially in the larger households. Kangaroo and other marsupials, and some of the larger lizards (for example, the goanna) were very plentiful in the bush, as were fish and turtles and dugong on the coasts and wild geese in many districts. But all these were extras or dividends; the staple everyday foods were the vegetable foods gathered day after day in apparently unending quantities by the women. For most months of the year there was always plenty of *kwoka*, a porridgelike dish prepared by soaking and mashing the small nuts of a native palm. These nuts grew in such quantity that in every large camp baskets or dishes of *kwoka*, at various stages of preparation, were always available, even for midnight snacks if anybody woke up hungry. *Kwoka* was about as dull and tasteless as Scotch porridge, but equally filling, and naked small boys full of *kwoka* had stomachs distended like balloons. In the wet season the place of *kwoka* was taken by *kolema*, a yam whose ripening and growing season was much shorter than that of the nuts from which *kwoka* was made. It was on the abundance of the *kolema* yams during January and February that the Tiwi supported the more elaborate of their collective ceremonials.

The abundance of these and other vegetable foods, plus the ample supply of game and fish in many places, meant that under aboriginal conditions the Tiwi lived at a food-consumption level *much further above the mere-*

[1] Actually there are no kangaroos on Melville and Bathurst Islands; the chief meat animal is a slightly smaller species of marsupial technically called the wallaby. As the distinction is important only to zoologists, and as many of the so-called kangaroos in American zoos are in fact wallabies, we prefer to use the more familiar word.

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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The mobility of people other than household heads was much less. Women and children could move only with the permission, and usually in the company, of their lord and master. Occasionally old and trusted wives might be sent, unsupervised, on a journey by their husbands or their brothers, usually to carry messages and bring back gossip, but young wives were never trusted to be out of sight either of the husband or of elderly female supervisors. Young men were less subject to their fathers' orders and hence were fairly free to come and go as they pleased, but the universal suspicion which all husbands bore toward wandering young men put severe restrictions on their mobility and prevented them attaching themselves to any household or camp in which they did not have some close relative.

The fact, then, that a man like Tu'untalumi was (in Tiwi terms) very mobile did not necessarily mean that members of his household shared his degree of mobility. When he took most of his large household with him on his journeys away from home, as he often did, it was always because he was going a considerable distance and was traveling slowly, living off the country as he went. In such cases he liked to have a large retinue to feed him on the way and also to permit him to entertain in fitting style when he arrived. For while it was true that at a funeral or at an initiation the relatives of the deceased or of the novices were supposed to take care of the feeding of all the visitors, nonetheless, wealthy and generous men like Tu'untalumi believed in taking along with them a bevy of young wives, with a couple of efficient elderly widow-wives in charge of them, to contribute to the food-getting and food-preparing activities. Of course the supervision of the young wives' morals in the strange environment was often difficult, especially in the hectic atmosphere of a big ceremonial, but this worry was compensated for by the fact that the visitor who came so attended was contributing a number of extra food providers to the labor force of the harassed hosts and thus making a generous gesture, and also by the fact that such a visitor was not dependent upon the hospitality provided by the hosts. Having his own food-producing unit with him, he could live better and stay longer than if he had come alone or only as one of a party of men. In this respect, as in so many others, a Tiwi household head's decision had to be reached by balancing against one another the two competing motives of, on the one hand, the desire to eat well and, on the other, the desire to keep his young wives safe from prowling bachelors. Ki-in-kumi, the wealthiest man of the Malauila band, usually decided not only to leave his wives at home but also not even to go himself. But Ki-in-kumi was a gloomy, pessimistic old man. Tu'untalumi usually decided to do the thing in style, travel with a large retinue, have all the comforts of home while in strange districts, and take his chances on the strange bachelors. He clearly believed that a good booming ceremony with lots to eat and himself in the center directing the dancing was well worth the risk of a few of his young wives being seduced off-stage. Men like Ki-in-kumi thought Tu'untalumi an old fool for not leaving his young wives at home, and Tu'untalumi probably thought that old Ki-in-kumi might as well be dead, especially since his death would be the occasion for a really magnificent funeral.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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881 led by the *Mikinatrinas*, carrying the baskets, followed by the *Mikinataras*, the *Mikinatarimas*, and the *Mikingulas*. No *kulama* woman accompanied this party.

As the *kulama* men entered the jungle they separated, each searching for vines which indicated the presence of the yam.[20] Before digging, however, the [824] [758] *kulama* men, softly calling "Oom-oom", gently patted the ground to wake up the yams, for, should any yam get a fright, its spirit, becoming annoyed, would make everyone ill with the *kulama* sickness. When digging the yams, the men were most careful not to break even one of the fine roots (Pl. 44D).

On filling in the holes, the men again made the thunder call, "Oom-oom", [821] which, they said, would cause more rain to fall before the day was over. One aboriginal accidentally broke a *kulama* yam while digging it. Instantly, he was on his feet, and, with the broken yam in his palm, dodged in and out among the trees, to escape the spirit of sickness released by the angry yam. After a few minutes, however, he returned, placed the broken yam carefully in the basket with the rest, and resumed his digging. His companions said that it was fortunate that he had only damaged the yam slightly, otherwise, its spirit would have made not only the careless aboriginal, but all of the *kulama* people ill.

When sufficient yams were collected, the party returned to camp in the same order as they went out, i.e., *Mikinatrinas*, *Mikinataras*, *Mikinatarimas* and *Mikingulas*. The *Mikinatrinas* carried the yams to the foot of a blood-wood tree, called the *wuringaleta*, cleared the grass from around the base and, taking the yams from the basket, placed them on the ground. They were covered with leaves by the female initiates, the *Mikinatriningas*.

(4) *The Preparation of the Ceremonial Ground*

In the late afternoon, the *kulama* men and the male initiates, excluding the *Marukumuni* and the *W'adjeniatis*, prepared the ceremonial ground, the *milimika*.

372 The men walked toward an open space in the forest, and with low cries, 881 beat the ground with sticks, while the leader, pulling up a tuft of grass, threw it into the air. At the place where it fell, the men dug a small circle, the *tumarapi* (navel), in which the yams were to be cooked. Then, sitting down, the men pushed the sand and grass outwards with their feet until the *milimika*, about fifteen feet in diameter, was cleared and surrounded by a low mound of earth and grass.

[222] [137] [20] The *kulama* yam (*Dioscorea sativa*, variety *rotunda*) (Pl. 44D), is about the size of a hen's egg and covered with hairs similar to a beard. It is held in the palm of the hand until it is placed carefully in the bark basket.

5: Basedow D-5 (1911)1913 OI20 Tiwi OI20

322 piece of the former fold are clasped between the fingers and thus used as a cup
415 the part lying opposite to the fingers being held to the lips.

Honey Eating.

222 In my notes on the north-western tribes of the Northern Territory I have
262 described[1] a honey-collecting implement and there, also, referred to somewhat
264 similar observations made by Dr. Wilson[2] and Keppel.[3]

On Bathurst Island I observed still another modification. A young flower-stalk of the fan-palm (*Livistonia humilis*), when about 50 to 70 centimetres long, is cut just above the trunk of the palm and its bottom end chewed until all the fibres are separated and look like the hairs of a brush. The juice, being quite sweet, is swallowed. The brush end is then inserted into the nest of the wild bee (*Trigona sp.*), whereby the honey gathers between the fibres. When saturated with honey, the brush end is passed back to the mouth and again sucked and chewed for a considerable time, after which it is once more returned to the honey for a fresh supply, and this is continued to repletion.

Tree Climbing.

481 Both male and female, young and old, are expert tree-climbers when in
[222] pursuit of game, honey of the wild bee, fruits, and seeds. As none of the trees on the islands grow to an abnormally large size, the butt is usually not too great in circumference to allow of the arms being thrown around it, so that the hands may obtain a firm hold on the side distant from the climber. Having obtained this hold while standing on the ground and facing the tree, the native jumps on to the butt, clutching it with the flat surfaces of his feet in a frog-like fashion. The knees in this position stand well outwards. The body hangs, suspended by the arms above and held against the tree by the legs below. The climber now raises his body; his hands quickly follow by a corresponding distance. Holding on with the latter he draws up his legs in a jumping manner once more to clutch the tree between the soles of his feet. This movement being repeated, he rapidly advances upwards.

Hunting and Fighting.

411 *Throwing-sticks and clubs.*—Several types of throwing-sticks and clubs are in use. They must be referred to under this general or collective heading, since it is hard to discriminate between the two implements and to say definitely where the throwing-stick ends and the club begins. They form an interesting group of Australian implements and weapons that allows of a satisfactory system of

[1] *Trans. Roy. Soc. S. Australia*, vol. xxxi, 1907, p. 90, Fig. 19.
[2] *Narrative Voyage Round the World*, 1835, p. 99.
[3] *A Visit to Indian Archipelago*, 1853, vol. 2, p. 166.

6: Hart E-5 (1928-1930) 1954 0120 Tiwi 0120

nature of the cause they diverged sharply. The same single-minded concentration which Mariano devoted to the cultivation of white men, Louis devoted to his sexual activities. Whether two men devoting most of their time one to preaching acculturation, the other to seduction, can be said to have a common basic personality, is a question best left to the personality experts; but at least to the superficial observer there was something vaguely similar in the grim and humorless way in which Louis pursued other men's wives and the way in which Mariano carried on his acculturation campaign.

Sexual irregularities are difficult data upon which to obtain accurate information in any culture. When, therefore, Louis is described as an habitual and constant seducer, no claim is made that he was actually as successful in this line of endeavor as tribal opinion maintained. All that we can be sure of is that Louis had an exalted reputation of this sort and he had it in a tribe where a number of circumstances combine to make seduction almost as easy and almost as common as eating or drinking. The seduction situation is largely the result of the marriage customs of the Tiwi which have the effect of forcing most men to remain bachelors until well into their thirties while concentrating all wives, old and young, in the hands of the older men. This means that the older a man gets the more wives he accumulates, and it would appear that the more he accumulates the more suspicious he becomes that some of them (probably the younger and more physically attractive ones) are being unfaithful to him. These suspicions are accentuated by (a) the way in which the day-to-day food gathering activities of the women are necessarily carried out—the women are widely dispersed through the bush, often working singly, well out of sight and hearing of each other; (b) the fact that young unmarried men are frequently hunting (or pretending to hunt) alone in the same general area of country as that in which an old man's numerous wives are gathering wild foods; and (c) the character of the vegetation in large sections of the Tiwi country, great stretches of it being just open enough to make it easy for native eyes to see somebody slipping through the trees, but just thick enough to make it difficult for them to be sure of identities at any distance.[8]

In such an atmosphere it is rare for any bachelor to live for more than a few months at most without having to face an accusation by some old man that he has been taking liberties with one of the latter's wives, and it is even rarer for an old man with a number of young wives not to have reason to suspect most or all of them of having been unfaithful to him several times at least in the course of a year. But in this setting of daily[7] seduction Louis' reputation was outstanding. In the period with which we are dealing here he had been suspected and publicly accused of adultery with almost every possible woman for miles around. His demeanor when accused by the outraged husbands was characteristic. Whereas other seducers denied the charge and asserted their essential purity, or tried to laugh it off as silly rumor ("Why, I don't even know the woman"), or alibied themselves and accused other men ("I wasn't even hunting in that direction that day, it must have been so-and-so, he was following a kangaroo down that way at the time in question"), or sometimes even

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 OI20 Tiwi OI20

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Figs. 5 and 6. Probing in the sand at the head of turtle tracks sometimes locates a nest of eggs

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 0120 Tiwi 0120

the water and declared, "it was o. k. for *murandanga*," meaning that it was not too stagnant or brackish for my health. By digging up some of the wet sand from the bottom of the well, the water seeped in to fill the void and soon we had our two containers filled. By this time Albert had started the fire and unpacked our canned rations.

One billy was placed on the fire for "tea leaf" and we broke open some corned beef and a loaf of fresh bread thoughtfully provided by the Superintendent's wife. When the billy boiled, a handful of tea and two handfuls of sugar were added and the pot set aside to cool. Big Jack had in the meantime gone over the dunes to look at the sea, and he reported that the wind was still too strong to allow us to continue in comfort and safety. We might as well take it easy for an hour or two and wait for it to calm down, he said. Almost immediately Albert and Agnes were fast asleep, their heads resting on tins of beef. Big Jack, however, took the axe and wandered off into the bush in back of the camp. After an hour it was obvious that the wind had no intention of dying, so we roused ourselves and strolled off down the beach in search of turtle eggs. We saw many tracks of the female turtles where they had lumbered out of the water up to high-water mark, and the mounds of sand kicked up while they dug their deep nests. Using a long, slender stick, Albert probed around these mounds hoping to feel the soft resistance of the rubbery eggs. Time and again he probed in a different nest quite unsuccessfully. Criscrossing one of the tracks leading to a nest were many little ones returning to the water; these eggs had lived to hatch. Finally Albert gave up, remarking, "That Black Joe mob make plenty big feast turtle egg." Late in the afternoon we returned empty handed.

Fortunately Big Jack, hunting along the little, mangrove-lined creek close by, had not had such bad luck. He soon appeared carrying three of the large mangrove crabs, their massive claws tightly closed with bindings of bark strips. The two main logs of the noon fire were still smouldering, and by adding to them we soon had a fast-burning blaze. When a glowing bed of coals was available, the crabs were thrown on top where they were soon steaming away in their own juices. It was a delicious supper—tender, sweet crab-

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 O120 Tiwi O120

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Fig. 15. Weather-worn poles mark the grave of someone long dead but not forgotten

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bush. He bin die long time ago." This had been his country while alive and it was still his country, for his spirit remains near the grave and still hunts the wild animals and birds, while the spirits of his wives collect the wild yams, and his little spirit children play in the bush. Bangri will share this food with others who come, and their *mobudities*, should they die and be buried in the country, for as long as his name is remembered, and until his grave-posts rot with the passing of time.

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But Bangri was not cooperative. The next day the hunters found little game in the bush and the women turned to the laborious job of digging six-foot holes with a stick to obtain the small yams that are to be found at this season. Again the grass was too thick, the snakes too cheeky, and Albert advised against our going bush. I decided the more logical explanation was that Albert considered we ourselves had ample food, and besides he was sincerely worried about his long run of bad luck. But he left with the others that

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12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 O120 Tiwi O120

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Fig. 17. "Hunting a possum"

It was soon overtaken by Albert who killed it quickly with a blow from a stick. As he brought it back he said, "Him big mother. See him pickaninni." And he held up a hairless baby barely three inches long, its eyes still closed, but very much alive. "Oh, kill it quick, Albert," I begged. He shook his head, "I can't kill him, I too sorry alonga him." Here we were at an impass, two people too sorry alonga him; one too sorry to kill it, and one too sorry to let it live. Who was right?

Meanwhile, Agnes took the mother possum and pulled the fur from a small area on the belly and then slitting the skin with the sharp end of a broken stick, she withdrew the gall bladder and intestines. "Him make him bad," she explained. We did not stop to cook the animal, but continued our search. This area had all been burned by the previous parties and already little delicate shoots of grass were poking up through the black ground.

During the next hour we wandered slowly through the bush and, although we saw many trees which had been inhabited by possums, they were now empty. One that looked most likely was hollow and Albert hopefully built a fire in the rotten base, then sat back and waited for the smoke to drive the animal out. After half an hour, it was quite obvious that no one was at home.

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Then our luck turned. This time, when Albert gave the "come here" call, it was because he had located a wild honey nest, or "sugar-bag," high in a large stringy-bark eucalyptus. There was little point in cutting this large tree down so Albert prepared to climb. First he cut a small sapling and laid it at a 45-degree angle against a crotch where the massive trunk split in two. Then, grip-

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 0120 Tiwi 0120

ping the axe with his teeth, he ran up the sapling on all fours with as much agility as a monkey. Upon reaching the crotch, he put his arms around the trunk, placed the soles of his feet close together against the bark, and quickly progressed in a sort of leaping motion up to the top of the tree. Once there he casually climbed up, over, and around the various branches, until he reached the object of his climb, the hollow branch with the little hole through which was passing a steady stream of small insects. This branch was quickly cut through and fell crashing to the ground. Soon Albert was down again, investigating this find with Agnes and me. The hole was enlarged and the combs of dark honey exposed, still crawling with the little black bees. We dug in with our fingers or brushes made by chewing small twigs, quite unmindful of the bees, who obligingly never developed stings in this part of the world. The honey was dark and very strong, but when mixed with the dry, crumbly, yellow "bee bread" a nice balance of taste was obtained. It took the three of us very little time to finish the sugar-bag and off we went—this time in a homeward direction.

The one possum looked very small and Albert again began muttering about "someone *mobuditi* make me bad luck." We separated again and when almost to the creek Agnes suddenly held me back and cautioned silence. Carefully she picked up a stout stick from the ground and then approached what I suddenly noticed was a very fat goana, about two feet long, apparently sound asleep on a nearby tree trunk. One quick blow and the lizard fell to the ground, quite dead. We carried the catch to the landing and quickly had another swim before Albert caught up. We were gathering firewood when Albert arrived and explained his delay by holding up another possum. The second possum was immediately gutted, then both were laid on the fire and turned frequently until all the fur had been burned off and the skin made brittle. The animals were quartered and laid again on the fire until well roasted. The goana received no preliminary treatment before going on the fire. When all were cooked, they were removed and laid on a "table" of clean, green leaves, and we reached in and tore off pieces of the steaming, juicy meat. It is impossible to describe this meat to someone who has not tasted it. All I can say is that it was tender and tasty and perfectly

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 OI20 Tiwi OI20

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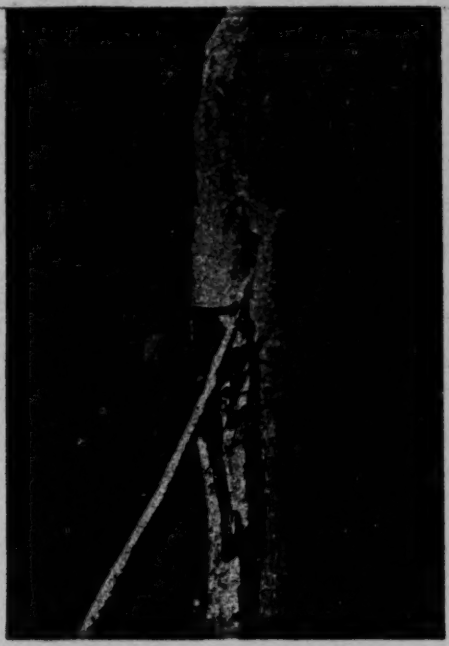

Figs. 18 and 19. With a tomahawk between his teeth, Albert goes after honey.